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ABSTRACT

The Urban Education Project developed by Research for Better Schools, Inc., has focused on meeting the needs of urban students in a changing and demanding society by creating the Urban Education Framework, which presents a new vision of the urban learner as culturally diverse, capable, motivated, and resilient. This vision suggests that urban educators build on the strengths of the urban learner. This study guide contains a series of readings that can help educators prepare for the restructuring that is necessary to address the needs of the urban learner. Questions follow each of the following selections: (1) "Russell: A Maverick?" (case study); (2) "Cultural Diversity and Learning"; (3) "Unrecognized Abilities/Underdeveloped Potential"; (4) "Enhancing Ability Development through Motivation and Effort"; and (5) "Resilience." One figure illustrates the restructuring model. Contains a 96-item bibliography that provides suggestions for further reading. (SLD)

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ED 375 237

# Restructuring to Educate the Urban Learner

## A Decisionmaking Framework

**Study Guide**

**Fall 1992**

*An Invitation*

*to*

*Dream, Think and Learn*

**RESEARCH FOR BETTER SCHOOLS, INC.**
**Philadelphia, PA**



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## SKETCH OF RESEARCH FOR BETTER SCHOOLS

In 1965, as the Federal government planned to put more resources into the nation's schools, a group of mid-Atlantic educators met to organize a "regional research and training laboratory." RBS was born early in 1966, as its charter of incorporation was granted and a Board of Directors convened regularly to establish a course for the fledgeling laboratory.

Over the years, through the leadership of Executive Directors James W. Becker, Robert G. Scanlon, and John E. Hopkins, RBS has responded with vitality and creativity to the educational needs of the region and the requirements of funding agencies. Individual projects, board members, and staff have changed through the years, but the underlying theme of helping to improve school effectiveness has remained constant.

### URBAN EDUCATION

RBS has a long-standing commitment to improving the quality of urban education in the mid-Atlantic region. For the past 25 years, we have been helping educators address the needs of students in the major urban centers. Over the years, RBS has used a variety of collaborative approaches to work with urban school districts. These include the following:

- Since 1982, RBS has emphasized teaching thinking within the context of urban education.
- During the mid-1980's, RBS staff developed a school improvement model which uses survey data to identify areas schools need to target for improvement.
- In 1986, RBS established the Mid-Atlantic Metropolitan Council (MAMC), a network of superintendents and key staff from the five largest cities in the region, to engage in collaborative activities which foster school improvement, articulate the needs and priorities of large urban school systems, promote the exchange of appropriate research-based information, and provide a vehicle for sharing information about effective programs.

The present mission of the Urban Education project builds upon these past experiences. The project seeks to initiate and support efforts to improve and restructure schooling in urban districts. Emphasis is placed upon helping urban educators meet the diverse needs of students by improving instructional programs, organizational effectiveness, and school accountability. These efforts reflect an integrated knowledge base which incorporates and disseminates the most current, promising, and pertinent research.

## RATIONALE FOR THE URBAN EDUCATION FRAMEWORK

The Urban Education Framework presents *a new vision of the urban learner* as culturally diverse, capable, motivated, and resilient (Bernal, 1980; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992; Tharp, 1989; and Winfield, 1991). This view represents a major paradigm shift in research and theories of intelligence, learning, and instruction that could lead to a new order of results for urban learners. The new view challenges former sweeping generalizations of urban learners as deprived, underachieving, unmotivated, and at-risk. It suggests that urban educators *build on the strengths of the urban learner* by embracing change that utilizes the research on cultural diversity and learning, unrecognized ability and underdeveloped potential, enhancing ability development through motivation and effort, and resilience. The urban education framework is grounded in the belief that *focused educational change that gives special attention to urban learner issues* can heighten opportunities for students to achieve academic success and life-long productivity.

## IN PREPARATION FOR DREAMING, THINKING, AND LEARNING

This study guide contains a series of readings. After each, except for the Overview section, are several questions. We recommend you give some thought to these questions. The information in this guide *and* your thoughts about it will be the foundation for the introduction of change.

| Pages with Questions | Focus |
|---|---|
| 5 | Russell: A Maverick? |
| 14 | Cultural Diversity and Learning |
| 17 | Unrecognized Abilities/Underdeveloped Potential |
| 20 | Enhancing Ability Development through Motivation and Effort |
| 23 | Resilience |

## RUSSELL: A MAVERICK?

When Russell entered Thomas Jefferson Elementary School, he was a bright-eyed, attractive child of average size. However, he seldom was clean or neatly dressed. At first, he seemed to enjoy school. Although he scored low in school readiness tests (i.e., could not identify colors and had difficulty with the alphabet), he seemed eager to learn. He knew his numbers and his teacher described him as a hard worker. Russell was assigned to remedial reading instruction to help him catch up with his peers. He never caught up, perhaps because he was routinely absent or late to school.

While investigating his absences and the fact that referrals for vision and allergy testing had not been pursued, school authorities learned about Russell's deplorable home situation. Russell and his four younger siblings lived in a welfare hotel with various relatives and friends of his mother. Drugs, crime, and unbelievable filth prevailed. His two older cousins were already in trouble with the law. Although his mother was drug-free, most of the people he lived with were on drugs. No one seemed to care whether Russell even went to school, let alone whether he did homework or was behind his peers.

When he was seven, Russell reported that he liked school and tried to come as often as he could. Jeannie Simmons, his second grade teacher, described him as a "unique child." She said he was creative and a hard worker who stays on a task until it is completed. She also noted that he took pride in his successes. Over the years, teachers stopped saying positive things about Russell. He seemed to stop trying. He fell further and further behind, especially in reading, and he began to place more emphasis on social interactions with his peers. This led to various negative incidents. In one, Russell was suspected of being the ring leader of a group that was stealing lunch money from other students. He was also involved in organizing a betting pool around various intramural sports.

At the age of ten, Russell came to the attention of the school child study team because of his history of antisocial behavior. Reluctantly, the child study team classified him as "emotionally disturbed" (ED); he was placed in a special, self-contained class with other disruptive youngsters. Soon Russell completely stopped coming to school. The home and school coordinator was unsuccessful in his attempt to get in touch with Russell's mother. When Russell's mother was finally contacted, she reported that Russell had run away, his whereabouts unknown. Russell became another dropout statistic of the Central Manhattan School District.

Eight years later, Russell came into the spotlight of the national news media when he was arrested as a major drug dealer. He was an 18 year-old millionaire who lived in a penthouse in Westchester and owned a Maserati, a Porsche, and a Rolls Royce. Over a four-year period, Russell had developed a drug empire which employed over 100 ghetto youths. As a gang leader, he "franchised" locations to trusted friends in return for a percentage of the profits. He also rewarded shift bosses with "play," or the rights to a percentage of the profits, from a corner or drug house. Most of his dealings were from "gatehouses," illicit fast-food outlets for drugs. A vast supply of abandoned buildings permitted Russell's associates to elude the police by moving from house to house. Until his arrest, Russell had built and managed a smoothly-run, undercover organization, which eluded the city police for nearly five years.

## REFLECTING UPON—
## RUSSELL: A MAVERICK?

1. Have you had a student like Russell in your classroom?

2. How would you have identified Russell's talents and abilities?

3. What kinds of strengths have you observed in Chapter I students?

4. What programs, resources, and strategies are available which would enable you to develop the talents of students like Russell?

## AN OVERVIEW—RESTRUCTURING TO EDUCATE THE URBAN LEARNER: A DECISIONMAKING FRAMEWORK

The Urban Education staff of Research for Better Schools believes that educators can help urban students become capable, motivated, resilient students who are able to build on their cultural strengths to achieve educational success. They are creating a new vision of the urban learner which is tied to a decisionmaking framework that will enable urban educators to restructure education by implementing the new vision.

This overview presents the (1) rationale for restructuring urban education, (2) research-based themes which are the foundation for the new vision of the urban learner, and (3) a decisionmaking framework that enables educators to implement the new vision of the urban learner.

### The Rationale for Restructuring Urban Education

The need for restructuring urban education emerges directly from the comments and analyses of educators and policymakers who (1) state the critical need in our society for urban poor and minority populations to fully contribute to our economy and democratic society, and, also, (2) describe the failure of current practices to educate urban learners, especially minorities, so that they can be productive citizens.

For example, the authors of *Building the Nation's Work Force From the Inside Out: Educating Minorities for the Twenty-first Century* make both of these points.

> In most of the statements supporting the integration of minorities into the workforce, there has been the acknowledgment, implicit or explicit, that the educational system has failed to provide adequate preparation for these groups to compete on an equal footing with whites in the labor force. Any policies to prepare U.S. minorities for labor-force participation in the areas where job strategies are most critical must involve the improvement (and perhaps restructuring) of the educational system for minorities at all levels of the educational pipeline (Rumberger & Levin, 1989).

Similarly, in the view of the former Maryland State Superintendent of Schools, an advisor to the Business Roundtable and the National Center on Education and the Economy, educators have not succeeded with poor minority students.

> We have a miserable performance record in educating low-income, racial- and language-minority students. Given the changing demographics of our nation, we cannot succeed economically or in sustaining our democracy unless we succeed educationally with those students with whom we have historically failed. We need to create the policies and structures that result in high achievement by those students as well (Hornbeck, 1992).

Clearly, concerned educators cannot accept the status quo and continue to do what they always have done in the past; it simply does not work. They must take responsibility for educating urban, poor, minority learners; recognize current educational failure; and do things differently. Educational practice must change. The new vision of the urban learner will guide educators in making required changes.

Another argument for specific attention to restructuring urban education lies in the inadequacy of current educational reform proposals to address the unique issues and conditions in urban schools and, thus, substantially impact the achievement problems of large numbers of poor minority students. In the midst of the many political, economic, social, and technological forces pressing to restructure schools for all students that followed the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the International Assessment of Mathematics and Science (IAMS) reports, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that generic restructuring frameworks and designs for educational change do not include specific attention to the unique issues and conditions in urban schools and, therefore, may not substantially impact on the academic achievement problems of large numbers of poor minority students (Lytle, 1992; Passow, 1991). The research foundation underlying the four themes of the new vision of the urban learner (described below) provide attention to the unique issues and contexts of urban learning.

The Urban Education staff recognizes that even if restructuring focuses directly on the complexities of educating urban learners, that is not enough to produce change. Restructuring is a tremendously complex, long-term set of events. It must also integrate the standard theories of human development, instructional pedagogy, and change with those that are specific to urban learners across all areas of educational decisionmaking and practice. Limiting attention to either the process of change (e.g., decentralization, shared decisionmaking, collaboration) or the content to be changed (e.g., higher order thinking skills instruction, technology, curriculum integration) will not sufficiently impact on student outcomes. Educational change, in the end, must be fully systemic and requires the collective, focused, and creative energy of educators, researchers, legislators, and leadership (Conley, 1991; McDonnell, 1989; Smith & O'Day, 1990).

## A New Vision of the Urban Learner: Four Research-Based Themes

Four themes, namely (1) cultural diversity and learning, (2) unrecognized ability/underdeveloped potential, (3) enhancing ability development through motivation and effort, and (4) resilience, provide the foundation for the new vision of the urban learner. This new vision sees the urban student as a capable, motivated, resilient learner, able to build on cultural strengths to achieve educational success; it challenges former characterizations of urban students as deprived, underachieving, unmotivated, and at-risk. In addition, the new vision requires building on the strengths of the urban learner by legitimizing and utilizing the research knowledge summarized in the theme areas.

The research establishing the foundation for the four themes demonstrates causal and/or correlational relationships between dynamic variables, and patterns characteristic of many urban students. Each theme is briefly developed in the attached summaries, which highlight important paradigm shifts in research and theories of intelligence, learning, and instruction leading to a new order of results for urban students. The research documents the major shifts in educators' knowledge and understanding that are required to realize the new vision of the urban learner. These changes include:

- Intelligence is modifiable not fixed (Feuerstein, 1980; Sternberg, 1985; Wasserman, 1987).
- Intelligence is multifaceted not unitary (Gardner, 1983; Sternberg, 1985).
- Culture is a more powerful instrument for recognizing and defining intelligent behavioral differences between groups than either genetics or socioeconomics (Bernal, 1980; Lesser, Fifer & Clark, 1965; Stodolsky & Lesser, 1967; Stevensen, 1992; Tharp, 1989).

The theme summaries integrate research information to develop implications for educational decisionmaking and to provide guidance to urban restructuring efforts. A brief overview of the content of each of the themes follows.

| | |
|---|---|
| Cultural diversity and learning | By understanding research findings on cultural differences and how social organization, sociolinguistics, cognition, and motivation are displayed by a specific culture, educators can align school curriculum, instruction, expectations, routines, and staff development to support the learning of the urban student (Tharp, 1989). |

| | |
|---|---|
| Unrecognized ability/ underdeveloped potential | The role of culture in cognitive development has clear implications for the need to identify and/or design instruments which recognize abilities which transcend the context of majority and individual cultures. Such abilities must be developed by the curriculum and instructional strategies used to meet the social and economic requirements of the 21st century, e.g., communication, problem solving, leadership, organization, creativity (Bernal, 1980). |
| Enhancing ability development through motivation and effort | Classrooms currently reflect a culture (in the organization of existing curriculum, instruction, and assessment) that emphasizes ability as the behavioral characteristic to be rewarded (i.e., motivation to try hard and learning from errors are not rewarded or recognized as a practical part of the learning process). In this model, errors are interpreted as an indication of failure and potential to learn is not seen. The emphasis needs to be changed to a new model of learning, one in which the classroom culture views effort as important as innate ability. Teachers must create an environment in which students learn from errors and effort is rewarded (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). |
| Resilience | The research on the health and psychological factors of resilience provides an alternative to current conceptualizations of educational risk. A student's decision to remain in school despite the fact that he or she sees few job opportunities, receives no support or incentives, and experiences negative peer pressure is an example of an individual's resilience. In order to move beyond simply identifying and categorizing youth as at-risk, educators must shift to understanding resilience and use educational strategies which increase resilience in students (Winfield, 1991; Rutter, 1987). |

An understanding of the research foundation of these four themes and their implications for strategies which translate such knowledge into educational practice provide the core of understanding that will enable educators to restructure classrooms and schools for urban learners.

## Implementing the New Vision of the Urban Learner: A Decisionmaking Framework

The following decisionmaking framework integrates the new vision of the urban learner (as expressed in the four themes) with four areas central to the functioning of schools, namely (1) curriculum, instruction, and assessment, (2) staff development, (3) school environment, and (4) management. Urban educators at all levels continuously make decisions in each of these areas. These decisions need to be informed by the research-based knowledge related to the urban learner. Information found in the four themes of the new vision can help urban educators conduct needs assessments and prioritize strategies in each of these functional areas. A summary of the contribution of the new vision of the urban learner (and the composite themes) to school decisionmaking in each of the functional areas is offered below.

| | |
|---|---|
| Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment | Curriculum and instruction must be tied to the cultural experiences/values of students; and assessment must facilitate the development of abilities and knowledge relevant to the lives of students and the needs of society (Cohen, 1992). |
| Staff Development | Educators must develop an expanded awareness and ability to value, understand, and engage culturally different students in order to develop their abilities, e.g., to establish new perceptions; enhance ability development through motivation and effort; recognize and develop culturally different ability patterns; and to use metaphors to relate familiar concepts to new knowledge (Bowers & Flinders, 1990). |
| School Environment | Schools and classrooms must be organized to assure the development of individual potential, i.e., high expectations, challenging curriculum, valued activities/roles, and caring and supportive environments that develop positive self esteem. Collaboration with community agencies and home environments must be assured to promote student growth and learning (Wehlage et al., 1989). |

| | |
|---|---|
| Management | In order to fully develop student abilities and potential, leadership must use management strategies such as collaboration, shared decisionmaking, and decentralization to help staff to focus on the backgrounds, experiences, and abilities of urban learners (Lytle, 1992). |

The restructuring of urban schools presents an opportunity to apply the creative energy and abilities of researchers, legislators, and educators in designing change. If knowledge about urban learners is the focus of such change efforts, the outcome will be urban students who are able to contribute to and strengthen society and enjoy the capacity to be life-long learners. Urban students must not be viewed as the problem, but rather as a major ingredient in the solution to problems of educational achievement, a strong economy, and a productive democratic society.

The Urban Education Project of RBS is further refining the themes that comprise the new vision for urban learners and developing educational strategies that will assist educators to fully implement the new vision in schools/districts. The project staff looks forward to joining with other educators in the Mid-Atlantic region to develop the leadership, educational strategies, materials, and training that will turn the vision into reality.

## CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND LEARNING

Culture structures the ways individuals perceive (objects, people, ideas), think, behave, and respond (Wasserman, 1971). Culturally different groups have developed strategies to cope with environmental, social, economic, and political demands (Ogbu, 1988). Knowledge, definition, and descriptions of the unique qualities and differences of diverse urban student populations (learners) provide a perspective for focusing on human functions and interactions at multiple levels of educational systems and are necessary components of any effort to redesign schooling.

### Definitions

Culture can be defined in the following ways:

- Ideations, symbols, behaviors, values, and beliefs that are shared by a human group. Programs for adapting to the environment (Banks, 1989).
- The knowledge, ideas, and skills that enable a group to survive (Bullivant, 1989).
- A problem-solving process in which members of a social group (society) engage collectively in response to the demands of their environment (physical, social, and spiritual), resulting in shared patterns of ways of resolving problems of existence in the context of time and space (Avery, 1992).
- Language is a cultural product subject to unique laws and principles and general properties of mind (Chomsky, 1972).
- Cultural transmission is an outcome of the socialization process, i.e., the match between a "support system" in the social environment and an "acquisition process" in the learner (Bruner, 1985).

## Implications

1. Educators must be made aware of how consistent cultural traditions and parenting values and practices facilitate or inhibit educational achievements. The historical interaction of cultural and family values with social and economic opportunity factors must be understood (Sau-Fong, 1992).

2. All learners organize information in ways that associate and link new information with existing knowledge in uniquely meaningful ways (McCombs, 1991). The culturally different learner's mental representations (schemes) of facts, concepts, principles, or theories may differ from the teacher's knowledge, experience, or expertise (Bowers & Flinders, 1991). Teachers must acquire knowledge of cultural patterns of communication and thought which will enable them to think strategically about the learner:

   - About their differences and their differing needs
   - About the interaction of these learners with subject matter and the particular school and community context
   - About ways to engage them with important, substantial ideas (NCRTL, 1992).

3. Effective teacher education may or may not be able to transcend social and political mores and belief systems (prejudice, racism, etc.) necessary to assure extended teacher roles and decrease teacher burnout (Whelage, et al., 1989). Staff development must continue to focus on these and related issues. Longstreet (1978) has identified five aspects of ethnicity that provide guidelines for understanding cultural differences:

   - Language/Verbal Communication (patterns of participating and listening)
   - Nonverbal Communication (body language, personal space, touch signs and symbols)
   - Orientation Modes (attention, time)
   - Social Value Patterns (beliefs about desirable and undesirable goals and behaviors)
   - Intellectual Modes (preferred ways of learning, knowledge most valued, skills emphasized).

## REFLECTING UPON—
## CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND LEARNING

1. How would you define culture?

2. What did you learn about the effect of culture on cognitive development and/or academic achievement in undergraduate or graduate school?

3. How could knowledge about the experiences and values of students facilitate the instructional process?

## UNRECOGNIZED ABILITIES/UNDERDEVELOPED POTENTIAL

We speak of two aspects of human intelligence, the common and unique trait of human modifiability and plasticity irrespective of condition or age, and the capacity to diversify oneself in critical aspects of mental behavior, cognitive style, and modality of interaction (from Feuerstein, 1990).

### Definitions

| | |
|---|---|
| Intelligence | A process broad enough to embrace a large variety of phenomena related to the ways humans learn and change (Feuerstein, 1990). |
| Mediation | A view of qualitative socialized influences on the development of intelligence related to the ways learners internalize knowledge, relate speech and practical activity, and influence their own "zone of proximal development" (Wertsch, 1985). |
| Cognitive Apprenticeship | A multi-phase view of teaching/learning to make more explicit the potential of the learner and his/her progress from novice to more expert ability (Collins, Brown & Holum, 1991). |
| Self-Regulation | The outcome of choosing to engage in self-directed metacognitive, cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes and skills, particularly as related to learner-centered instruction and performance (McCombs & Marzano, 1989). |

### Theme Statement

The movement to teach thinking and problem solving to every student in America stems from both an appreciation of the tenets of democracy and from the latest research on the development of intelligence and cognitive ability as it pertains to schooling. Today, American education is at a very important juncture in preparing its citizens for living and employment in a world that demands the most effective schooling and the very best engagement of the talents of its people.

A broader-based view of human intelligence and a perspective embedded in the diversity and cultural variety of expressions of humanity lead to the issue of both unrecognized capabilities and underdeveloped potential in various student populations. Children represented in urban classrooms, often are subject to this phenomenon, including children in poverty, migrant or immigrant-experienced children, and children with bilingual, ethnic, and different racial backgrounds.

In terms of "restructuring" American education, while system-wide change is an important consideration for long-term success, the need to understand the essential elements for transforming every classroom into an environment that supports sound cognitive development for all learners is the most important goal to pursue. Understanding those elements is the first step of such restructuring.

## Implications

1. Seek alternative ways of identifying able youngsters rather than the standard psychometric (IQ) route.

2. Study ways of influencing the developing higher operations in students by means of social contexts at school and home.

3. Focus on mediational and self-regulatory development from as early as possible in a student's "educational" career.

## REFLECTING UPON—
## UNRECOGNIZED ABILITIES/UNDERDEVELOPED POTENTIAL

1. How do you define intelligence?

2. How do you determine a student's intelligence or potential?

3. What role might be played by curriculum, instruction, and assessment decisions in the enhancement of human potential?

4. What policies/practices need to be reconsidered in the development of human potential?

## ENHANCING ABILITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MOTIVATION AND EFFORT

Sustained motivation and the application of effort are critical factors which increase learning ability in urban students. Achievement is increased when students recognize the relationships between attitude, effort, and knowledge, on the one hand, and learning tasks on the other.

### Definitions

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|---|---|
| Ability | Competence in doing. Ability is often understood as interchangeable with intelligence—the ability to learn or understand new situations. |
| Motivation | The presence of a need or desire to act. Motivation for learning is described as either intrinsic or extrinsic. |
| Effort | A serious attempt, the total work done to achieve a particular end. When applied to academic tasks, effort connotes student volition to do the task at hand. |

### Theme Statement

Many students and educators incorrectly believe that urban students do not have the ability/intelligence to succeed in complicated academic tasks. Students and parents frequently attribute academic success to natural ability rather than to effort and motivation. When educators describe urban students as lacking the motivation to learn, they often do not understand how serious a barrier this is or how it can be removed. When students give up after initial failure, they deprive themselves of the opportunity to learn. In general, students who believe that intelligence or ability improves with practice are more likely to persist on tasks.

Research demonstrates that a new understanding of ability/intelligence is central to improving achievement for urban students. Poor cognitive functioning can be improved and ability or intelligence is plastic and influenced by learning experiences. Part of good teaching is persuading students about the importance of accepting challenges and the necessity of expanded effort.

Because intelligence and ability can be enhanced through learning experiences, ability grouping or academic tracking should not be the predominant means for grouping students. Academic achievement is dependent on students accepting the reality that they will make mistakes and experience failure as part of the learning process. Motivation to learn involves persisting in spite of mistakes or failures until one has achieved a new level of competence. Motivation to learn includes affective and cognitive factors which can be stimulated by teachers.

## Implications

1. Students, educators, and parents must understand that ability is very much influenced by learning experiences.

2. Students and teachers should be encouraged to approach learning situations as opportunities to increase competence (ability).

3. Students should be heterogeneously grouped during most of the school day.

4. Educators need to understand how to elicit and sustain student motivation for learning in all students.

## REFLECTING UPON—
## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
## ABILITY DEVELOPMENT, EFFORT, AND MOTIVATION

1. What are some faulty assumptions about ability?

2. In what ways is the emphasis on student ability central to educational programs and instruction? (Give some examples.)

3. What will be required to shift the current emphasis on the identification of student ability to the development of student ability through motivation and effort?

## RESILIENCE

Many urban students live in neighborhoods with high rates of poverty and unemployment, where drugs and violent crime are abundant, and where high stress often affects them, their home, school, and community environment. Yet in spite of these multiple risk factors, we find children who become healthy, self-supportive, responsible, productive adults. These children are "stress-resistant, hardy, and in the most currently used term, resilient, in spite of severe stress and adversity" (Benard, 1991, p. 2).

### Definitions

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|---|---|
| Resilience | Protective factors that modify, ameliorate, or alter a person's response to risk factors and operate at critical turning points during one's life (Rutter, 1987). |
| Protective factors | Traits, conditions, situations, episodes that enable individuals to circumvent life stresses (Benard, 1991). |
| Risk factors | Negative conditions such as poverty, unemployment, unstable family relationships, and inadequate education that are sources of stress and adversity (Schorr, 1988). |
| Coping strategies | Positive or negative responses to stressful situations (Jose, 1992). |

### Theme Statement

In many urban neighborhoods there is a heavy concentration of people who are poor, unskilled, uneducated, unemployed, and unmarried. More and more of our urban children grow up in these environments; among others whose lives do not demonstrate that "education is meaningful, that steady employment is a viable alternative to welfare and illegal pursuits, and that a stable family is an aspect of normalcy" (Schorr, 1988, p. 20). As a result, many of our urban children develop negative coping strategies such as avoidance, aggression, rebelliousness, and alienation. When coupled with typical adolescent tendencies of egocentrism, impulsiveness, exploitiveness, risk taking, and immediate gratification, the outcome is often deadly.

In the past, educational researchers have focused considerable attention on factors associated with risk. Today, many researchers believe that while it is useful to be familiar with risk factors, it is critically important to focus on the individual, familial, school, and environmental sources of resilience

(Benard, 1991; Garmezy & Rutter, 1983; McIntyre, White, & Yoast, 1990; Winfield, 1991). Descriptions of resilient children include some commonly held attributes such as social competence skills (responsiveness, flexibility, empathy and caring, communication skills, and a sense of humor), problem-solving skills (abstract thinking, reflection, and the development of alternative solutions), a sense of one's own identity (self-esteem), the ability to exert some control over one's own environment (self-efficacy), and a sense of purpose and future (hopefulness, educational aspirations, and persistence).

Within the family, school, and community there exists a triad of protective factors that are critical to the healthy development of children. These include caring and support, high expectations, and meaningful participation. Protective factor researchers believe that balancing risk and protective factors in terms of frequency, duration, and severity at critical life stages can foster resiliency in urban children (McIntyre, White, & Yoast, 1990, Winfield, 1991). These findings provide powerful evidence that as educators we can take action to develop protective factors in schools and reduce the negative effect of multiple and interacting risk factors.

## Implications

According to Garmezy (1991), the school can serve as a "protective shield" that helps the student withstand the pressures of stress and adversity. Schools can make the shift from over-emphasizing at-riskness to enhancing resilience in urban children by acquiring information about knowledge transmission and acquisition practices that exist in specific ethnic cultures and incorporating those practices into the classroom and school environment (Nelson-Le Gall, 1985; Shade, 1982; Stallings, 1991; Levin, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1990; Slavin, 1985). Aspects schools should consider include:

1. Classroom norms and teaching behaviors that emphasize socially interactive learning activities (Nelson-Le Gall & Jones, 1990)

2. Teaching that uses the student's cultural context to help achieve academic success (Ladson-Billings, 1990; Shade, 1982)

3. School instructional and organizational designs that foster more systemic patterns of thinking and doing (Senge & Lannon-Kim, 1991)

4. A broad spectrum of interagency services in schools that respond to multiple risk factors (Schorr, 1988)

5. Comprehensive parent/caregiver training programs that emphasize cognitive, behavioral, affective, and life skills approaches in collaboration with other community organizations (DeMarsh & Kumpfer, 1985; Irvine, 1990).

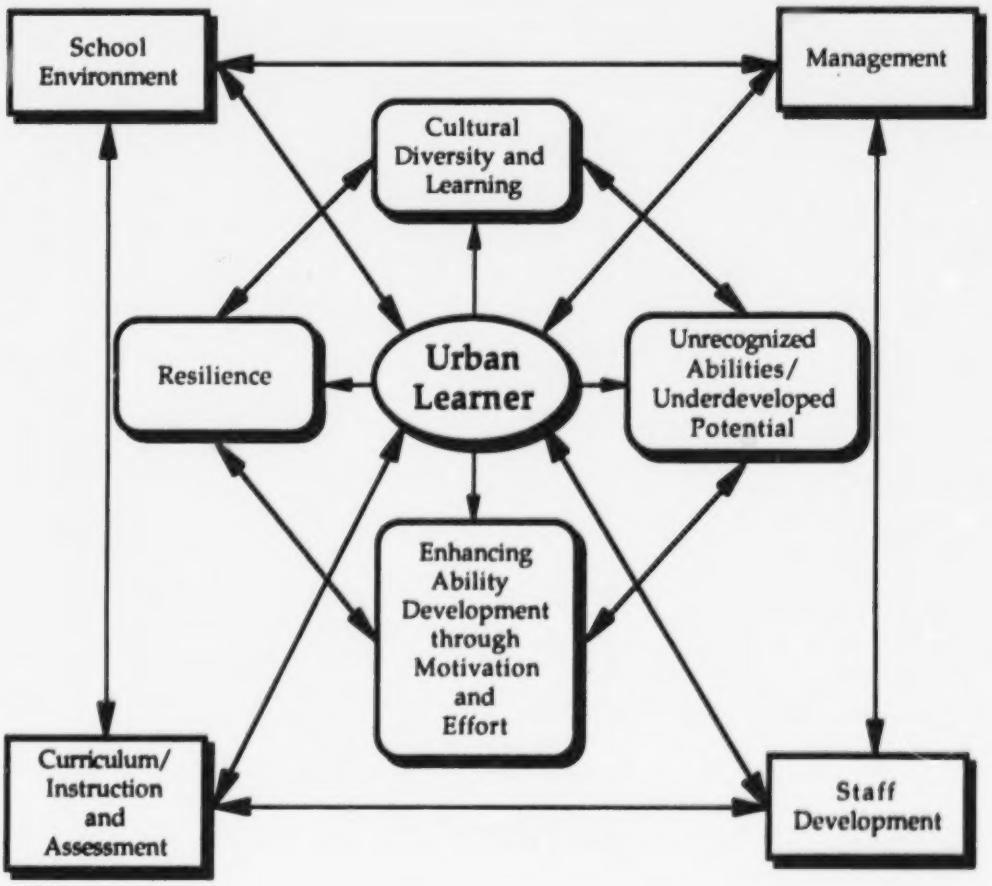
## REFLECTING UPON—
## RESILIENCE

1. How might a continued focus and labeling of students "at-risk" limit the development of student strengths?

2. What characteristics of resilience do you observe in students in your classroom?

3. What opportunities exist to improve and strengthen the abilities of urban students to be more resilient?

## AN ILLUSTRATION—
## RESTRUCTURING TO EDUCATE THE URBAN LEARNER:
## A DECISIONMAKING FRAMEWORK



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